



Chehalis Basin Partnership

-- Minutes--

DATE: Friday, February 23, 2024
TIME: 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
LOCATION: Grays Harbor County Commissioners Hearing Room:
100 W. Broadway, Montesano, WA & **ZOOM**

A. Partnership Business

1. Welcome, Introductions

Members present: Chris Stearns (Thurston PUD), Jason Walter (Weyerhaeuser), Brian Shay (Hoquiam), Paula Holroyde (Thurston Citizen), Rex Hapala (DNR), Lee Napier (Lewis County), Jan Robinson (Chehalis River Basin Land Trust), Kim Ashmore (Centralia), Andy Oien (Centralia), Sures (Grays Harbor County), Bryan Benjamin (Thurston County), Terry Willis (Grays Harbor Citizen), Angela Johnson (Ecology), Alissa Shay (Port of Grays Harbor), Colleen Suter (Chehalis Tribe), Terry Harris (Chehalis)

Guests present: Lauren McFarland, Holly Fuller, Christ Stone (Centralia), Alex Gustafson, Jacqui Brown, Rick Eaton, Chanele Holbrook, Mark Mobbs, Ben Cross, Jennifer Lewis,

2. CBP Funding Update

Kirsten Harma, Coordinator

The grant requested through the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan/Office of the Chehalis Basin was approved. OCB staff from Ecology present at this meeting confirmed that the grant request was approved by the OCB director. This grant will provide the CBP with \$70,000 to facilitate the Scatter Creek subcommittee, and create a “local strategy” that aligns streamflow restoration goals with habitat enhancement goals through compiling data and identifying actions and projects that can improve ecosystem conditions.

Action: Volunteers to interview consultant applicants to run the Scatter Creek project included: Colleen Parrott, Bryan Benjamin, Terry Harris, Jennifer Lewis (Ecology).

3. Evergreen Internship Program

Kirsten Harma, Coordinator

Evergreen has a new Center for Climate Action and Sustainability. The program provides paid internships with local organizations. Kirsten worked with the director to submit a job description for a student to help the Partnership lay the groundwork for a Local Drought Resilience Plan. The intern would interview stakeholders and identify data needs that would help the CBP apply for a drought resilience grant if that pilot funding program continues at Ecology.

Action: Volunteers to interview internship applicants include Terry Willis, Kim Ashmore or someone from Centralia, and Jennifer Lewis (Ecology)

B. Presentations & Discussions

4. Streamflow Restoration - Requests for Letters of Support

David Nazy, EA Consulting for City of McCleary

Objective: Share proposal for City of McCleary aquifer study, environmental monitoring, and MAR feasibility study. Group to discuss project scope relative to our Watershed Plan goals. Decision on support letter

Decision: The Chehalis Basin Partnership approved providing a letter of support for this project.

5. Streamflow Restoration - Requests for Letters of Support

Bryan Benjamin, Thurston County Community Planning & Economic Development

Objective: Share proposal by Thurston County to support transfer of up to 504.8 af/y from the TransAlta Water Bank to Ecology's Trust Water Rights program. Group to discuss project scope relative to our Watershed Plan goals. Discussion. Decision on support letter

Bryan provided a presentation on this project's history and the request for a letter of support from the Chehalis Basin Partnership. A project summary had been distributed before the meeting.

Discussion:

Q) How does this water purchase benefit Delezene watershed, etc.?

A) This purchase meets the basin's "accounting minimum" of a one-to-one water offset on the Chehalis Basinwide scale. The County recognizes that the purchase won't provide any hydrologic benefits to the tributaries and their watersheds. Thurston County will continue to be involved in the basin and the CBP's efforts and will continue to look for projects that benefit tributaries.

Q) Could you purchase more water than this?

A) The County requested more water than was included in this grant application, but Ecology requested that the County provide two options for a purchase of less water. Ultimately, Ecology will decide how much water it will fund. Thurston County will look for additional grants to buy more water.

Q) Will future applications to Ecology's Streamflow Restoration grant program be less competitive because this legislative "minimum offset" has been met?

A) Angela from Ecology ensured the group that all future projects submitted for the Chehalis will be looked at on their own merits. Nothing in the guidelines makes a project less competitive for occurring in a watershed that has met its target.

Comment: Lauren provided information that the QIN would like to see included in the letter. They would like to ask that Ecology consider flow needs of Spring Chinook, the new flow study document, and the future of the Skookumchuck Dam, in considering this funding proposal. QIN does not object to this project moving forward.

Discussion: Other partners were not comfortable with including this language in a letter everyone is being asked to sign on to support. Study results are not final and no decisions have been made about the Skookumchuck dam. Kirsten provided an alternative of just referring Ecology to a separate letter

that QIN could provide, and then not including any of QIN's specific points in our shared letter. She can draft a letter that speaks to this specific trust water purchase project and how it is a top-ranking project that was included in our Streamflow Restoration Plan.

Decision: The Chehalis Basin Partnership approved a letter of support pending the opportunity to review the content of the letter before it is sent. Kirsten will draft a letter, distribute it to Partnership members, and then they will have 3 days to comment before the letter is passed on to the Chair for signature. If there are major concerns, the letter will not be finalized.

Break

Streamflow Restoration - Requests for Letters of Support continued

Alex Gustafson, Trout Unlimited – Improvements to municipal water infrastructure and fish passage on the north fork Newaukum River – Building collaborations and shared solutions.

Objective: Group to discuss project scope relative to our Watershed Plan goals. Decision.

Alex provided a presentation on the project. This project concept has been worked on by a sub-group of the Chehalis Basin Partnership for several years. Trout Unlimited has recently come in to help sponsor the project. This is a feasibility study that will look for ways to improve fish passage at a WDFW-owned fishway at the city of the City of Chehalis water-intake and City of Centralia owned infrastructure. The purpose of the grant is to identify all interests and then co-develop alternatives that take everyone's needs into account.

Q) Why wasn't Centralia involved earlier?

A) Kirsten presented the project concept to them over a year ago, but at that time it was under the sponsorship of the Coast Salmon Partnership. Trout Unlimited is a new sponsor, and would like to speak with Centralia soon.

Discussion: The Cities need to look at the project details before finalizing support.

Decision: The Chehalis Basin Partnership approved a letter of support pending the opportunity to review the content of the letter before it is sent. Kirsten will draft a letter, distribute it to Partnership members, and then they will have 3 days to comment before the letter is passed on to the Chair for signature. If there are major concerns, the letter will not be finalized.

6. Local Drought Preparedness Planning Grant Pilot Program

Follow up discussion

Kim Ashmore reported that Centralia and Chehalis will be submitting a proposal to this Ecology grant program to improve their water system inter-tie.

C. Other Business and Closing

1. Other Partner Updates

2. Public Comment

Public comments are welcome at this time.

3. Adjourn